

## Why I Am Not Gay

Until recently, men having sex with men was disapproved of in American culture. Actually, “disapproved of” isn’t really the right word — it was immoral, illegal, disgusting. People who did it lived in secrecy, under the constant threat of blackmail for their actions.

In the tumult of the 1960s, various out-groups — blacks, Chicanos, Native Americans — begun organizing themselves and demanding to be respected and given their due. And men-who-had-sex-with-men decided that they were an out-group — they were gay — and they deserved rights too.

In doing so, they transformed an action (having relationships with someone of the same gender) into an identity (“being gay”). And, using the normal human mechanisms for distinguishing between people in your club and those not in it, they closed ranks. Gay men didn’t have sex with women. Those who did weren’t gay, they were “bi” (which became a whole new identity in itself) — or probably just lying to themselves. And straight men had to be on constant guard against being attracted to other men — if they were, it meant that deep down, they were actually gay.

This new gay identity was projected back through history — famous historical figures were “outed” as gay, because they’d once taken lovers of their own gender. They truly were gay underneath, it was said — it was just a homophobic society that forced them to appear to like the opposite sex.

Along with the identity went an attempt at justification. Being gay wasn’t “a choice,” they argued — it was innate. Some people were just born gay and others weren’t. To a culture that tried to “correct” gay people into being straight, they insisted that correction was impossible — they just weren’t wired this way. (They even provided a ridiculous genetic explanation for how a species with a small percentage gay people might evolve.)

This might have been a good thing to say — maybe even necessary in such a homophobic culture — but in the end it has to be seen as simply wrong. Having sex with other people of your gender isn’t an identity, it’s an act. And, like sex in general among consenting adults, people should be able to do it if they want to. Having sex with someone shouldn’t require an identity crisis. (Nobody sees having-sex-with-white-people as part of their identity, even if that’s primarily who they’re attracted to.)

People shouldn’t be forced to categorize themselves as “gay,” “straight,” or “bi.” People are just people. Maybe you’re mostly attracted to men. Maybe you’re mostly attracted to women. Maybe you’re attracted to everyone. These are historical claims — not future predictions. If we truly want to expand the scope of human freedom, we should encourage people to date who they want; not just provide more categorical boxes for them to slot themselves into. A man who has mostly dated men should be just as welcome to date women as a woman who’s mostly dated men.

So that’s why I’m not gay. I hook up with people. I enjoy it. Sometimes they’re men, sometimes they’re women. I don’t see why it needs to be any more complicated than that.

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September 8, 2009